UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/862
S/1995/199
14 March 1995
ENGL1SH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 51
QUESTION OF CYPRUS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fiftieth year

Letter dated 13 March 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In view of your interest in the question of Cyprus and your efforts to establish favourable conditions for bringing about a just and viable solution to the problem, I consider it useful and timely to inform you of the following.

On 6 March 1995, the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union (EU) decided that the negotiations on the membership by the Republic of Cyprus in the Union would begin six months after the end of the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference of the States members of the Union. The Council, in addition, emphasized that the membership should benefit all the communities of Cyprus and promote civil peace and reconciliation, which would lead to greater security and prosperity for the entire population of the island.

This decision, which also provides for a specific strategy to be followed in preparing for Cyprus's membership, has been welcomed by all the principal actors of the international community as an historic stage which should decisively reinforce the efforts to bring about a just and viable solution to the problem of Cyprus.

Furthermore, at the meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council, which was held on the same day in Brussels, it was decided that the customs union between the EU member countries and Turkey should be established by 1 January 1996. Two statements on the financial cooperation and political dialogue which the European Union would be prepared to undertake with Turkey were also adopted.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mr. Karayalsin, chose to avail himself of that important occasion for his country in order to express at the very outset of his official statement to the Association Council his firm belief that concluding the agreement on the customs union "should help strengthen the common values which Turkey shares with the States members of the Community".

Unfortunately, Mr. Karayalsin saw fit to contradict, further on in his speech, those good initial intentions by stating that Turkey "disagreed with the decision by the Union on the membership negotiations with Cyprus" and that, "should the undesirable possibility arise that these negotiations were to begin before arriving at an overall settlement of the problem of Cyprus, his country would have no other option but to take measures to ensure a similar integration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus".

It is obvious that this statement by the Turkish Minister refers to the problem of Cyprus in terms which are absolutely incompatible with international law and the Charter of the United Nations as well as the Organization's resolutions, which should be the basis for any settlement of the problem of Cyprus, particularly the concept of a bi-communal and bi-zonal Cypriot federation. Furthermore, the positions expressed by Mr. Karayalsin directly undermine your efforts and those of the international community to promote the peace process, while the unacceptable status quo, following the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish troops, has lasted for more than 20 years. Those positions, lastly, constitute a surprising attempt by Turkey to interfere in the internal order of the European Union and block its decisions.

It should be noted that Turkey invokes, through legal arguments that are arbitrary to say the least, the Zurich and London agreements in order to justify its opposition to Cyprus's membership in the Union, at a time when its Minister for Foreign Affairs does not hesitate to make official statements whose very content constitutes a flagrant violation of the basic provisions of those agreements.

The argument that Turkey is contemplating only the economic integration of the northern part of the island, and not its outright annexation, could not be taken seriously into consideration. The notion of "economic integration" in fact implies specific and obvious political and legal consequences, particularly when it is linked to the continuation of the military occupation and the total political dependence of the Cypriot territories in question on Ankara.

Mr. Karayalsin's statement follows a series of similar official statements by figures in Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community, as well as the decision concerning it by the National Security Council of Turkey of 15 February 1995, which does not leave any doubt about either the real objectives of Ankara's policy with regard to Cyprus or the sincerity of the so-called "moderate" stands taken by Mr. Denktas. The recent Turkish Cypriot initiative to adopt a "law" providing for the transfer, particularly to Turkish settlers, of titles to property belonging to Greek Cypriots is, moreover, in keeping with the same viewpoint marked by inflexibility and profound disregard for international law.

I should like to stress that Cyprus's membership in the European Union is not an end in itself, but rather a means to achieve a just and lasting agreement on the problem of Cyprus guaranteeing the welfare of the island's entire population. In this context, my Government believes that Turkey has many other major and constructive options instead of defying international legality and levelling subsequent threats against a sovereign and independent State that is a member of the United Nations. Turkey could decide to commit itself to respect for law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. It could contribute

to the search for a peaceful solution to this problem, which tarnishes its image and constitutes a permanent obstacle in its international relations, including those with the European Union. Lastly, Turkey could demonstrate the political will necessary for completing the peace process and place itself, together with Mr. Denktas, in a positive light.

The decisions taken in Brussels and the prospect of Cyprus's membership provide a unique opportunity to overcome the current impasse. It is to be hoped that the Turkish Government will be able to seize this opportunity in the interest of the peace and security of the entire region.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 51, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christos ZACHARAKIS
Permanent Representative